

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY X55

and Ophelia the other that if she died as Juliet,
she came to
life as Imogen."

"She will never come to life again now,"
muttered the lad,
burying his face in his hands.

"No, she will never come to life. She has
played her last
part. But you must think of that lonely death in
the tawdry

dressing-room simply as a strange lurid fragment
from some

Jacobean tragedy, as a wonderful scene from
Webster, or Ford,

or Cyril Tournour. The girl never really lived, and
so she has

never really died. To you at least she was always
a dream, a

phantom that flitted through Shakespeare's plays
and left them

lovelier for its presence, a reed through which
Shakespeare's

music sounded richer and more full of joy. The
moment she

touched actual life, she marred it, and it marred
her, and so

she passed away. Mourn for Ophelia, if you like.
Put ashes

on your head because Cordelia was strangled. Cry
out against

Heaven because the daughter of Brabantio
died. But don't

waste your tears over Sibyl Vane. She was less
real than

they are."

There was a silence. The evening darkened in
the room.

Noiselessly, and with silver feet, the shadows
crept in from the

garden. The colours faded wearily out of things.
After some time Dorian Gray looked up. "You

have
explained me to myself, Harry," he murmured,
with something

of a sigh of relief. "I felt all that you have said,
but somehow

I was afraid of it, and I could not express it to
myself. How well

you know me! But we will not talk again of what
has happened.

It has been a marvellous experience. That is all.
I wonder if

life has still in store for me anything as
marvellous."

"Life has everything in store for you, Dorian.
There is

nothing that you, with your extraordinary good
looks, will not

be able to do."

"But suppose, Harry, I became haggard, and
old, and

wrinkled? What then?"

"Ah, then," said Lord Henry, rising to go—"then,
my dear

Dorian, you would have to fight for your
victories. As it is,

they are brought to you. No, you must keep your
good looks.

We live in an age that reads too much to be
wise, and that

thinks too much to be beautiful. We cannot
spare you. And

now you had better dress, and drive down to
the club. We

are rather late, as it is."

"I think I shall join you at the Opera, Harry. I
feel too tired

to eat anything. What is the number of your
sister's box?"